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CLAIMS: *The following is a listing of all claims in the application with their statuses and the texts of all active claims.*

1. - 4. (CANCELED)

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5 (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for enabling contact among travelers with similar travel plans, comprising:

soliciting available travel plans from a multitude of Posting travelers,

~~quantitatively characterizing each of said travel available plans'~~

~~origins, destinations, and times,~~

quantitatively characterizing each of said available travel plans'

origins and destinations by their numerical latitudes and

longitudes,

posting said quantitatively characterized available plans to a

database,

further soliciting from each said Posting traveler and posting to said

database, sufficient contact information to establish

communications with said Posting traveler,

further soliciting from each said Posting traveler and posting to said

database in predefined coded and Boolean formats such further

compatibility criteria characterizing said Posting traveler and

further travel plans as said Posting traveler desires,

further soliciting from each said Posting traveler and posting to said

database such descriptive information characterizing the said

Posting traveler and ~~his or her~~ further travel plans as said

Posting traveler desires,

soliciting a desired travel plan from a Browsing traveler,

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quantitatively characterizing the origin, and destination, and time of
said desired travel plan by their numerical latitudes and
longitudes,
further soliciting from said Browsing traveler, in said predefined
coded and Boolean formats, such further compatibility criteria
characterizing the Browsing traveler and further travel plans as
said Browsing traveler desires,
preselecting from said database those of said available plans that are
logically compatible with said Browsing traveler's compatibility
criteria and said Posting traveler's compatibility criteria,
calculating a scalar origin difference as the absolute magnitude of the
distance between said desired origin and each said available
origin in said database,
calculating a scalar destination difference as the absolute magnitude
of the distance between said desired destination and each said
available destination in said database,
~~calculating a scalar time difference as the absolute magnitude of the~~
~~difference between said said desired travel time and each said~~
~~available travel time in said database,~~
~~converting each said scalar time difference into an equivalent scalar~~
~~meeting distance by applying a predefined numerical~~
~~conversion factor,~~

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calculating a rank of the similarity between said desired plan and each of said available preselected plans as a mathematical combination selected from the group consisting of the sum and the root mean square of said origin difference, and said destination difference, ~~and said meeting distance respectively,~~ ordering said ~~available~~ preselected plans from said database according to said rank, presenting said ~~ranked~~ ordered plans together with said respective descriptions to ~~the~~ said Browsing traveler, enabling ~~the~~ said Browsing traveler to choose a plan from said presented plans, and presenting to ~~the~~ said Browsing traveler said contact information sufficient to establish communication with ~~the~~ said Posting traveler associated with said chosen plan,

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whereby travelers with similar travel plans can discover each other, and
whereby the amount of information required to characterize said travel plans is
reduced to a bare minimum, and
whereby said quantitative characterizations of said origins and said destinations
can be obtained from external sources including published data and
Global Positioning Satellite Systems, and
whereby said Browsing travelers can automatically and quickly scan a multitude
of travel plans, and
whereby said Browsing travelers can spontaneously consider ad-hoc choice
criteria while reviewing said descriptive information as part of ~~the manual~~
~~final choice process~~ said presentation, and
whereby said Browsing travelers can exercise explicit control over said final
choice process, and are not constrained to accept the putative optimal
choice of said ordering according to said rank.

6. - 7. (CANCELED)

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8 (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for enabling contact among travelers with similar travel plans, comprising:

soliciting available travel plans from a ~~plurality~~ multitude of Posting travelers,

determining the coordinates of the origins and destinations of each of said plans on a geographical map,

posting said available plans including ~~the travel times and~~ said coordinates to a database,

further soliciting from each said Posting traveler and posting to said database, sufficient contact information to establish communications with said Posting traveler,

further soliciting from each said Posting traveler and posting to said database in predefined coded and Boolean formats such further compatibility criteria characterizing said Posting traveler and further travel plans as said Posting traveler desires,

further soliciting from each said Posting traveler and posting to said database such descriptive information characterizing ~~the~~ said Posting traveler and ~~his or her~~ further travel plans as said Posting traveler desires,

soliciting a desired travel plan from a Browsing traveler,

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further soliciting from said Browsing traveler, in said predefined
coded and Boolean formats, such further compatibility criteria
characterizing the Browsing traveler and further travel plans as
said Browsing traveler desires,
preselecting from said database those of said available plans that are
logically compatible with said Browsing traveler's compatibility
criteria and said Posting traveler's compatibility criteria,
determining the coordinates of the origins and destinations of said
desired plan on a map
~~quantitatively characterizing the time of said desired travel plan,~~
calculating a scalar origin difference as the absolute magnitude of the
distance measured on said map between said desired origin
and each said available preselected origin,
calculating a scalar destination difference as the absolute magnitude
of the distance measured on said map between said desired
destination and each said available preselected destination,
~~calculating a scalar time difference as the absolute magnitude of the~~
~~difference between said said desired travel time and each said~~
~~available travel time in said database,~~
~~converting each said scalar time difference into an equivalent scalar~~
~~meeting distance by applying a predefined numerical~~
~~conversion factor,~~

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calculating a rank of the similarity between said desired plan and each of said ~~available~~ preselected plans as a combination selected from the group consisting of the sum and the root mean square of said origin difference, and said destination difference, ~~and said meeting distance respectively,~~ ordering said ~~available~~ preselected plans from said database according to said rank, presenting said ~~ranked-ordered~~ plans together with said respective descriptions to ~~the~~ said Browsing traveler, ~~and~~ enabling ~~the~~ said Browsing traveler to choose a plan from said presented plans, and presenting to ~~the~~ said Browsing traveler said contact information sufficient to establish communication with ~~the~~ said Posting traveler associated with said chosen plan.

9 (NEW) The method of claim 5 wherein:

one or both of said origins and said destinations, of said available travel plans and said desired travel plan, are quantitatively approximated by the numerical latitudes and longitudes of their associated postal codes,
whereby said Posting travelers and said Browsing travelers can conveniently and easily specify said quantitative characterizations of said origins and said destinations.

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10 (NEW) The method of claim 5 further including:

quantitatively characterizing the time of occurrence of each of said
preselected travel plans,

quantitatively characterizing the time of occurrence of said desired
travel plan,

calculating a scalar time difference as the absolute magnitude of
the difference between said desired travel plan time of
occurrence and each said preselected travel plan time of
occurrence,

predetermining a plurality of anticipated travel modes and vehicle
types,

predetermining a numerical conversion factor equal to an estimate
of the average speed of each of said plurality of travel
modes and vehicle types,

further soliciting within said solicitation of each of said available
travel plans from said multitude of said Posting travelers, a
selection of travel method or vehicle type from said plurality
of anticipated travel modes and vehicle types,

converting each said scalar time difference into an equivalent
scalar meeting distance by multiplying with said
predetermined numerical conversion factor associated with
said selected travel method or vehicle type, and

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calculating said rank of the similarity between said desired plan and each of said available plans as a mathematical combination selected from the group consisting of the sum and the root mean square of said origin difference, said destination difference, and said meeting distance respectively,

whereby said ordering of said presented plans further accounts for said scalar time differences and reflects the relative merits of said presented plans as perceived by said Browsing traveler.

11 (NEW) The method of claim 10 further including:

predetermining a default travel method and vehicle type selected from the group consisting of said plurality of anticipated travel modes and vehicle types, as the one estimated most likely to be used, and substituting said predetermined numerical conversion factor associated with said default travel method and vehicle type, for any unavailable numerical conversion factor due to lack of response to said solicitation of said selection of travel method or vehicle type,

whereby said calculation of said rank is not obstructed by said lack of response.

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12 (NEW) The method of claim 8 further including:

quantitatively characterizing the time of occurrence of each of said

preselected travel plans,

quantitatively characterizing the time of occurrence of said desired

travel plan,

calculating a scalar time difference as the absolute magnitude of

the difference between said desired travel plan time of

occurrence and each said preselected travel plan time of

occurrence,

predetermining a plurality of anticipated travel modes and vehicle

types,

predetermining a numerical conversion factor equal to an estimate

of the average speed of each of said travel modes and

vehicle types,

further soliciting within said solicitation of each of said available

travel plans from said multitude of said Posting travelers, a

selection of travel method or vehicle type from said plurality

of anticipated travel modes and vehicle types,,

converting each said scalar time difference into an equivalent

scalar meeting distance by multiplying with said

predetermined numerical conversion factor associated with

said selected travel method or vehicle type, and

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calculating said rank of the similarity between said desired plan and each of said available plans as a mathematical combination selected from the group consisting of the sum and the root mean square of said origin difference, said destination difference, and said meeting distance respectively.

13 (NEW) The method of claim 12 further including:

predetermining a default travel method and vehicle type selected from the group consisting of said plurality of anticipated travel modes and vehicle types, as the one estimated most likely to be used, and substituting said predetermined numerical conversion factor associated with said default travel method and vehicle type, for any unavailable numerical conversion factor due to lack of response to said solicitation of said selection of travel method or vehicle type.